DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 519 CS 008 134

AUTHOR Parker, Richard
TITLE Towards More Nutritious Reading Programs. P.E.N. (Primary English Notes) 43.
INSTITUTION Primary English Teaching Association, Rozelle (Australia).
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 7p.
AVAILABLE FROM Primary English Teaching Association, P.O. Box 167, Rozelle, New South Wales 2039, Australia ($0.75, Australian currency).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT Primary English Notes (P.E.N.); n43 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; Elementary Education; Enrichment Activities; *Learning Activities; *Program Improvement; Reading Improvement; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Programs; *Student Motivation; *Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The teaching activities in this pamphlet focus on improving the quality of reading programs. It lists class activities recommended for daily and weekly practice as well as activities to be used sparingly (the reading lesson, graded reading groups, basal reading schemes, worksheets and workbooks). The pamphlet recommends that activities in choral reading, decoding, small group work, crossword puzzles, and segmented comics and stories be substituted occasionally for regular classroom work. Next, it lists 21 varieties of cloze activities and classroom activities to avoid. The pamphlet concludes with a summary of research findings relevant to reading teachers about planned reading programs, characteristics of successful teachers of reading, and characteristics of classrooms in which children succeed and classrooms in which they fail. (EL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

P.E.N.
PRIMARY ENGLISH NOTES
Classroom Notes...from the Primary English Teaching Association
PETA

ED263519

Towards more Nutritious Reading Programs

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marie Carr

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

We asked children why they like to read. Here are some of their responses:

- 'Reading is fun to learn.'
- 'Reading helps you very much to do lots of things.'
- 'I like to read because I like the work sheet.'
- 'I like to read because it makes you read when you grow up. And you have to not talk because that's why some people do not know how to read. And if you don't try your best your teacher would not love you.'
- 'Why I like to read? It's fun. Sometimes so funny that I fall off my chair.'
- 'Something is boring in reading: it is when the teacher talks a lot.'
- 'If you want to read you must understand what you read because if you don't understand it is not good reading.'

What do YOUR pupils say about reading?

Do they find the reading diet you provide them interesting, varied, palatable, satisfying?

Do they, like Oliver, ask for more?

This *P.E.N.* aims to provide teachers with sound ideas for planning nutritious reading programs and to help those who feel a need to spice-up an existing program with some new ingredients.

Nutritious Reading Programs

Serve Liberal Helpings of These Activities at least Once Daily

- *Read aloud* to children. Select a variety of stories so that they develop an awareness of the nature and range of materials available. Read happy stories, sad stories, spooky stories, stories from the past, the future, other lands. Read them fairy stories, true life accounts, biographies, newspapers, magazines — anything to which children respond positively.
- Allow time for *silent reading*. Let the children see you reading too — modelling is important. After all, if you have more important things to do than reading, perhaps the children have too.
- Encourage *oral discussion*, particularly about a topic that leads to a subsequent reading activity. In this way, readers are helped to discover the value of using what they already know to make sense of what authors write.
- Encourage children to add words to their *personal dictionaries*. This practice expands vocabulary, assists in spelling development, supports children's efforts in editing initial drafts of their writing and teaches and reinforces knowledge of alphabetical order.
- Encourage children to *write*. 'If you have a poor writing program you will also have a poor reading program' (Jerome Haste, Adelaide, 1982).

Serve Liberal Helpings of These Activities at least Once Weekly

- *Read aloud to provide information*, making this a valued source of some of the information the children need in Social Science, Natural Science and the other curriculum areas. It will help to make them aware of different uses of reading.
- Require children to *read to gain information* in each of the curriculum areas. 'Reading across the curriculum' cannot be left to chance — it needs to be part of a teacher's deliberate planning.
- Engage children in *structured activities* (e.g. cloze) designed to develop their ability to use effective, meaning-based strategies. For ideas see '10 Ideas for Reading' (*P.E.N.* 31) and '20 Reading Activities' (*P.E.N.* 44).
- Require children to read and follow *written instructions*. 'Reading leading to doing' is valuable preparation for the types of reading tasks which constitute a major part of the reading done by many adults in our society.
- Encourage children to *use the school (or public) library* as fully and as often as possible and for all sorts of reasons. A good children's library is a vital, 'user-friendly' treasure house of enjoyable reading matter, informative or recreational, catering for a wide range of interests and abilities. Libraries not only satisfy reading interests but actually create them — through storytelling, book introductions, sound and video recordings, films, displays, competitions (e.g. during Children's Book Week each July). For ideas about the use and value of libraries, see 'Library on the Move' (*P.E.N.* 21).

Serve These Activities Sparingly

There are many activities and materials which, if used wisely, can assist children in their reading development. Used repeatedly, out of any context other than that it is 'reading time', or without consideration of the needs of individual children, some of these activities and materials may be detrimental to children's progress as readers. So, be cautious with the following.

- **The 'Reading Lesson'**

It is important for teachers to make deliberate plans for their pupils to engage in reading tasks. However, children learn most effectively when reading occurs naturally at various times during the day (including at home) and in contexts where the purpose of reading is obvious. Merely because children have just completed the morning recess, or because the 'reading' bell has just sounded, is not of itself a valid reason for 'doing' reading.

- **Graded Reading Groups**

It is not a good idea to keep children in rigidly fixed reading ability groups — which are usually constituted on the basis of a single standardised test score. Graded reading groups are based on two misconceptions. The first is that a test score (usually a reading age) can be matched with the supposed readability level of a piece of text. The second is that two children of similar reading age will be equally well placed to handle that particular piece of text.

Reading groups need to be flexibly constituted. Sometimes the anticipated ability of children to handle a specific reading task may be an appropriate basis. At other times it is preferable for children of mixed abilities to be grouped together according to interest, or some arbitrary factor such as their initial or birth-date. Children benefit from opportunities to discuss their reading experiences, in a less artificial situation, with other readers of greater and lesser ability.

- **Basal Reading Schemes**

A problem with basal reading schemes is that they try to be 'all things to all teachers'. Provided that teachers recognise this and do not fear that some aspect of the child's reading development will be forever jeopardised if some aspect or component of the scheme is omitted, or that successful reading of part of a scheme is dependent upon prior satisfactory completion of the preceding part of the scheme, basal reading schemes may serve a useful function in the classroom.

Teachers need to make selections from schemes, based on their understanding of the reading process, the nature of language learning, and the characteristics of children in the class. In short, teachers should use reading schemes, not be used by them.

- **Worksheets and Workbooks**

The main limitation of worksheets and the exercises found in most workbooks is that they involve little actual *reading*. There is little to be gained in reading development if reading-related tasks are tedious, repetitive, meaningless and unrelated to the important issues which dominate the classroom on any given day.

Continued on page 6.

Nutritious Reading Programs

Substitutes — Serve These Instead

- **Choral Reading**

Rather than individual oral reading, engage children in choral reading on a group or whole-class basis. 'Big books' lend themselves to this use, particularly those which use repetitive language. Plays are an obvious source of material, as are songs, ballads, nursery rhymes, ads and jingles. The group context minimises individual reluctance to read orally. Careful selection of material ensures that at least parts of it are within the capacity of all children in the group or class.

- **Decoding Activities That Make Sense**

The problem with most planned decoding programs is that the activities are perceived by children to lack meaning and purpose. There are activities which are not so perceived. They will frequently arise out of the classroom use of meaningful reading material, and include:

- Identification of words which start with the same sound, or have a particular spelling pattern and sound the same, or have a particular spelling pattern but sound different.
- Identification of the part of a word which corresponds with a particular sound.
- Discussion of word meaning, with justification from use in the text, and subsequent reference to dictionary.
- Word games such as segmented words, where parts of the word are revealed and children suggest possible completed words.
- Word 'Hangman' — letters are suggested by children but must be presented in the correct location in the word to be acceptable.
- Compilation of a personal dictionary.
- 'Word Bingo' using children's personal dictionaries.

Where any of these activities are used independently of 'real reading', it is preferable to treat them as 'word study' or 'decoding' activities — not as reading. Reading is concerned with meaning, not just decoding.

- **Small-group Work**

There appears to be considerable support for the use of small group (3-5 pupils) activities in language programs. Benefits stem from the fact that children are required to think and talk about the way in which language functions. Small groups provide greater opportunity to do this. Use small groups to maximise the effectiveness of:

cloze passages
standard comprehension passages
summary writing
editing
spelling and vocabulary exercises

- **Crossword Puzzles**

Crossword puzzles provide excellent opportunities for developing vocabulary and for increasing awareness of the graphophonic features of words. A good starting point is the *Puffin Book of Crosswords.*

- **Segmented Comics and Stories**

Start with a familiar text (story, poem, song, short article). Segment it into meaningful units. Have children arrange these in what they consider to be the most appropriate way. Ask them to justify their choices.

Variations can include:

use of overhead projector
reassembly of pages of a 'big book'
attempts to construct alternative acceptable versions with comics (reveal the final frame only after discussion of the sequence to that point)
start with a large segment and gradually move to smaller but still meaningful units.

A basic familiarity with 'story grammar' may help segmentation activities. Here is an example, together with variations in terminology by two exponents:

Story Grammar

BEVERLEY RANDELL-PRICE	*STORY*	STEIN & GLENN
Setting	Turtle walked to the pond for a swim.	*Setting*
Predicament	On the way home, something happened to Turtle. 'I am not happy with my head out.'	*Initiating Event*
Resolution	'I will keep my head in,' he thought. 'That's what a wise turtle would do.'	*Internal Response*
Setting	Turtle walked home with his head in. He couldn't see where he was going.	*Attempt*
Predicament	He fell into a hole and couldn't climb out.	*Direct Consequence*
Resolution	He thought, 'Look what has happened now. I am not happy with my head in. And now I can't climb out of here. What would a wise turtle do now?"	*Reaction*
	He put his head out and cried 'Help!'	

21 Varieties of Cloze Activities

Adding Variety to Cloze Activities

Cloze activities are those in which children are asked to suggest appropriate words to fill gaps deliberately left in given sentences. Such activities are believed to develop comprehension ability, but some care is needed:

- Don't over-use cloze; once or at most twice weekly.
- Give children practice before requiring them to do cloze exercises, the results of which you intend to use as data for re-grouping, or any other decision making.
- There are no 'right' answers; insertions are evaluated in terms of their acceptability.
- Avoid random deletions (e.g. mechanically deleting, say, every tenth word).

Cloze activities should be varied in nature and purpose, as in the following guide.

21 Different Varieties of Cloze

1. Read-aloud. When reading to children, pause and invite suggestions as to possibilities for the next idea, phrase or word. Have children justify their suggestions; encourage discussion of any discrepancy between the text and the children's suggestions.

2. Riddles — Oral. Children love riddles. Riddles introduce them to the processes which underline cloze. They present an excellent opportunity for prediction and justification based always on what makes sense. *Example:*

'What am I? I'm brown. I'm kept in a jar in the refrigerator.' (Children make predictions; suggestions are discussed.)
'Children like me spread on toast for breakfast.' (Predictions are retained or discarded in the light of this clue.)
'I'm crunchy.' (etc.)

3. Riddles — Written (a) by Teacher. Clues are written down and children, individually or in groups, determine the best solution to the final line, 'I'm a _____.' Comparisons are made and children asked to justify choices.

(b) by Pupils. Once familiar with the convention, children can create their own riddles. Younger ones may require a little more structure, e.g.

I am _____ years old.
I live in a _____.
I like to _____.
I'm not a _____.
I'm a _____.

For older children, clues can be put in a conspicuous place on a daily basis. Each child may lodge an entry *once* during the week, noting the day on which it is lodged. At the end of the week, entries are opened in order of lodgement, and predictions are evaluated in the light of *all* the clues.

4. Riddle Cloze. This is a logical extension of the above activities, and an ideal way of familiarising children with the cloze technique itself. *Example:*

'I'm brown. I'm kept in a jar in the _____.
_____ like me spread on toast for breakfast.
I'm crunchy peanut butter.'

5. Riddles in the Content Areas. *Example:*

(a) You will find it in your kitchen.
(b) Your body cannot live without it.
(c) It is not a food.
(d) It is a mineral.
(e) A chemist calls it sodium chloride.
It is _____

A more demanding alternative is to leave gaps in the clues. The same procedure may be used with recipes and craft activities, and varied to reinforce different types of understanding. *Example:*

(a) Take 2 cups of _____
(Reinforces the nature of the ingredients.)
(b) Take 2 _____ of flour.
(Reinforces the measures used.)
(c) _____ in 1 cup of milk.
(Reinforces the process used.)
(d) Blend in _____ cup of milk.
(Reinforces the quantities required.)

6. Nursery Rhyme Cloze. This an excellent way of introducing children to cloze, since the rhymes used are familiar. Thus, early attempts at cloze are likely to be successful:

Hickory dickory _____
The mouse _____ up the clock (etc.)

7. Song Cloze. Song cloze also has the advantage of high predictability and popularity. *Example:*

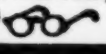
We all live in a _____ submarine,
A yellow _____ (etc.)

8. Language Experience Cloze: Since language experience stories (the stories they have themselves written) are so predictable for the children who have created them, they are ideal materials for cloze passages — which in turn offer another *use* for these stories.

9. Poetry Cloze. In thinking of words deleted from a poem, children develop an awareness of the conventions of poetry, such as rhyme, rhythm and figurative language.

10. 'Scratch-it' Cloze. Using a prepared overhead transparency sheet, cover selected words with 'white-out' (liquid paper). When children have made their predictions, covered words can be revealed by using a coin to scratch off the 'white out'.

11. Zip Cloze. This is similar to 'scratch-it' cloze. On an overhead transparency, or on a white board or chart, cover selected words with masking tape. Tape can be 'zipped off' to reveal text.

12. Rhebus Cloze. As an aid to less able readers, visual clues may be provided. *Example:* He was bumping into things because he had forgotten his 

21 Varieties of Cloze Activities

13. Synonym Cloze. This is a useful way of developing vocabulary in context and promoting effective reading strategies. *Example:*
This was the_____(initial) time I ran in a_____(contest).

14. Antonym Cloze. This is a vocabulary exercise for more accomplished readers.

15. Multiple Choice Cloze. By careful selection of alternatives, the reader's attention can be directed to grammar, spelling or meaning. *Example:*

I hurried myself, | hoped / hoping / hopping | to arrive first, but John drew | ahead / level / behind | so that I could see him out of the corner of my | field / hearing / eye.

16. Structure Word Deletions. If structure words (conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, articles) are deleted, readers must make use of their intuitive feeling for the flow of language if they are to provide acceptable replacements. *Example:*
He was walking_____the road, when a red blur appeared on_____horizon. 'What could_____be?' he wondered.

17. Content Word Deletions. If content words (nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives) are deleted, readers must make use of what they know generally of the subject, what they have picked up thus far from the passage, and their expectations of the way in which the passage will unfold. *Example:*
Where on earth could it be? They had looked everywhere in the room. Ben had looked under the_____. Carol had _____through the boxes stacked _____the_____trunk.

18. Letter Clues. The reader's awareness of the relationship between common letter combinations and the words in which they occur may be strengthened through cloze passages where specific components (usually the initial consonant or consonant cluster) of the deleted words are provided. The reader's task is to select a word which makes sense, maintains the flow of the sentence, and incorporates the letters indicated. *Example:* Ben had looked under the b_____.

19. Bingo Cloze. Provide a list of the words from a selected text, plus two or three more. The addition of words to the list is essential, as the emphasis is on providing acceptable words, rather than a single correct word.

20. Carry-on Cloze. Words can be selected for deletion because the act of replacement requires reading on. This is particularly effective if the reader is required to read beyond sentence boundaries. *Example:*
'I didn't think about it,' said Jan. 'I_____my mother.'
The teacher smiled. 'Well, next to thinking, asking is the way to become smart.'

21. 'Look-again' Cloze. Words may also be selected for deletion because the act of replacement requires a keen awareness of the progressive build-up of the story, or reference to the previous sentence. *Example:*
The teacher smiled. 'Well, next to thinking, asking is the way to become smart. What did your_____say?'

How to Make the Most of the 21 Varieties

As suggested by Gary McLennan, require the children (preferably in small groups) to follow these steps:
1. *Predict* the word that fits best.
2. *Justify* the choice.
3. *Compare* choices with original text.
4. *Discuss* any differences.

Avoid These Activities

At best, the following activities will cause no lasting harm to children's language development and use. At worst they will create groups of children who can't read, won't read, dislike reading, or read inefficiently.

- **There is little to commend in the practice of 'round-robin' reading. Each child reads only a small segment of text; children are exposed to poor models of oral reading; weaker readers may experience such increased levels of anxiety that their performance is impaired, their self-esteem dented and their reading development inhibited even further.**
- **Avoid all reading activities which will be perceived by children to be meaningless, irrelevant or dull — activities such as phonic drill, flashcard drill, vocabulary exercises not drawn from an extended piece of text, re-readings of the same limited segment of a text, and encounters with structured texts designed to provide exposure to a limited number of words, rather than to communicate meaning.**
- **The visual and auditory discrimination exercises of the type found in many traditional 'reading readiness' programs may be useless. (Identifying the duck that faces the wrong way or the snowman that is 'different' may only serve to improve children's ability to identify stylised ducks facing in different directions, or outlines of snowmen of differing characteristics.) There is little evidence to suggest that the underlying perceptual abilities can be improved in school-age children: there is even less evidence to support the supposed link between such development and subsequent development in reading.**
- **Avoid highly structured materials and programs. Such materials may appear logical to teachers and may be simple to use in the classroom. However, the highly specific skills developed through the use of structured materials do not generalise to 'real' reading situations. Because the texts which constitute such materials tend to be somewhat stilted and unnatural, the task of learning to read is made unnecessarily difficult.**

What the Specialists Say

What the Specialists Say

The following summary of research findings relevant to reading teachers was presented by J. Mason and L. Unsworth at the Ninth Australian Reading Conference in Launceston, August 1983.

What the Specialists Say about Planned Reading Programs:

- If pupils are to develop into proficient readers, then education systems, schools and classrooms must make a generous allocation of *time* for reading.
- Not only must time be allocated, but each pupil must be *actively* involved in reading during that time if optimal gains are to be made.
- Children who experience success in reading become progressively *better* readers; conversely, children who experience low levels of success in reading are impaired in their development.
- It is not sufficient merely to allocate time for reading; attention must be given to the *quality and relevance* of reading tasks carried out during this time.

What the Specialists Say about Successful Teachers of Reading:

- Successful reading teachers *expect* that all their pupils will learn to read; indeed, they are determined that their pupils *will* succeed in reading.
- Successful teachers are effective classroom managers. It is through good classroom organisation and control that learning time is maximised.
- Successful teachers ensure that children understand the exact nature of each reading task, and they provide rapid 'feedback' on completion of the task.
- Successful teachers of reading are *contrivers:* they work in an informed and deliberate way to create real opportunities for meaningful reading. They can be contrasted to teachers who are *reactors* (i.e., those who recognise opportunities for reading when they arise) and *counteractors* (i.e., teachers who expend most of their time and effort counteracting negative influences within the classroom).

What the Specialists Say about Classrooms Where Children Succeed in Reading:

- Teacher-led small groups are common.
- Children spend far more time on actual *reading* than on completing reading-related tasks.
- *Silent reading* is the predominant reading activity.
- Reading activities focus on *context* and invite the reader to employ a variety of beyond-word cues.
- The material encountered by pupils tends to be well within their capacity, resulting in a low rate of errors.
- When oral reading occurs, teachers tend to interrupt only when serious meaning-loss errors occur.

What the Specialists Say about Classrooms Where Children Fail in Reading:

- Children are placed in graded reading groups with other children who have scored similarly on a selected reading text. 'Good' readers work with other 'good' readers and become even more proficient: 'poor' readers find themselves grouped with other children who have failed, and their low achievement is further reinforced.
- Most 'reading' time is spent on oral reading (often of inappropriate material) or on reading-related activities.
- Too much attention is focused on within-word cues, with the result that decoding skills are frequently good, but the ability to reconstruct meaning is extremely limited.
- Material is frequently far too difficult. Reading is invariably disjointed, frustrating and devoid of meaning.
- The amount of reading done by children in their reading tasks (and tests) is small.

from page 2.

- **Original Sources**

Use original source materials in the classroom rather than texts, where possible. Newspapers and magazines, actual blank forms, real letters and invitations to real people are preferable to books full of contrived exercises in finding information in the newspaper, completing forms and filling out invitations. The real thing stimulates more spontaneous discussion and more effective learning.

Similarly, there is usually more value in reading whole books rather than extracts.

- **Reading Tests**

Teachers need to distinguish between testing and teaching. They should also look critically at tests, and evaluate the usefulness of both formal and informal testing procedures for their particular purposes. Standardised tests seldom provide teachers with information that will improve their ability to plan appropriate learning experiences for the children in their class. Testing which does not result in improved instruction is a waste of time.

P.E.N. (Editor: R.D. Walshe) is published six times a year by the Primary English Teaching Association, P.O. Box 167, Rozelle N.S.W. 2039 (Telephone 818 2591)

P.E.N. 43 was written by Richard Parker, who is a Past President of the Australian Reading Association and Senior Lecturer in Reading Education at Macarthur Institute of Higher Education (formerly Milperra C.A.E.).